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BBC File

FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE

AMERICAN EMBASSY

LONDON, W. 1.

1 Grosvenor Square

EYES ONLY

16 April 1958

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Foreign Broadcast Information Service

25X1

Washington, D. C.

25X1

Dear [redacted] Subject: Coordination Meeting

I was pleased to learn that the subject of Arabic language coverage has been placed on the agenda for the FBIS-BBC coordination meeting to be held in Washington soon, because it will certainly focus attention on every key issue—the willingness of the BBC to expand its staff to keep abreast of the increasing number of significant broadcasts.

Probably you are aware that the recent action on the part of the BBC in eliminating all of its Satellite Arabic coverage in favor of additional North African coverage is a direct result of the fact that it is attempting to tailor its monitoring to its budget rather than to the broadcasts made. Usually such actions in the past have led to an assumption on the part of FBIS of a larger and larger share of the monitoring load, as it did in 1954 after the reorganization of the BBC.

The problem confronting the BBC in its Arabic language monitoring will probably have to be faced again in Russian language coverage. As I pointed out in my February progress report this year, the Russian team now produces from 200,000 to 250,000 words of material a week, exclusive of a very heavy regional coverage, compared with a weekly production of from 130,000 to 160,000 in 1953. This expansion has been accomplished partially as a result of increased efficiency, and partially as a result of an increase of about 15 percent in staff. Now that team is working at maximum capacity and even small requests from FBIS, though willingly accepted, present a very real burden.

I do not think that anyone can review Soviet broadcasts today with their massive outbursts of letters for two dozen nations and the speeches of its leader without realizing that the volume of material which must be processed in these broadcasts is increasing greatly. I therefore think that a pertinent question that might be addressed to the BBC at the coming meeting would be: will the BBC in the coming year or 18 months be able to supply FBIS with its needs for material in the Russian language.

Considering the severe shortage of monitors on its Russian and Arabic teams, there can be little doubt that the BBC will either have to go to the Treasury for money or FBIS will have to assume an increasing percentage of

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the coverage. From my position at Caversham I believe that only a very strong case in writing will prompt the BBC to expand.

I hope very much that these comments on the present Arabic coverage problem and the impending Russian coverage problem will be of some use to you at the time of the meeting.

Sincerely,

Chie, London Bureau

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BBC Meeting

1 Grosvenor Square

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 Washington, D. C.

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